Mystery of waste dump here solved

by BOB LANE
Times staff reporter

The mysterious waste-chemical dump no one could find over the weekend has been found. It was used as a dump between 1952 and 1962 and now is occupied by a fabrication plant and offices of the Kenworth Truck Co.

A congressional investigations subcommittee last week identified chemical-waste dumps used by the nation's major chemical companies — including the unidentified site in Seattle.

After local agencies scrambled to identify the dump site, its location was disclosed by the office of Representative Bob Eckhardt of Texas, subcommittee chairman.

The site is at 8801 E. Marginal Way S.

The committee said it had been told the dump contained 200 tons of chemicals, including heavy metals and trace metals. It was described as having a pH level of more than 12, meaning it was highly caustic.

The Environmental Protection Agency's Seattle office said the dump site lies between the Duwamish River and East Marginal Way South. Boeing Co. property lies to the north and the Monsanto Chemical Co. is to the south.

An E.P.A. spokesman said Monsanto "undoubtedly" was the generator of the waste chemicals. The agency, however, said it had not yet talked with the company.

A Monsanto official denied to The Times yesterday his firm had dumped waste chemicals in the site along the Duwamish.

The E.P.A. said the land is paved over and is drained by storm drains. Buildings and parking lots occupy much of the property.

Officials do not know if the material is still dangerous or if any is draining out of the dump.

The E.P.A. spokesman said the agency had, by coincidence, scheduled a late-November meeting with Monsanto to discuss its waste-disposal practices. The meeting had nothing to do with the findings of the Eckhardt committee, the spokesman said.

The Eckhardt committee sent voluntary questionnaires to the nation's 53 top chemical companies, asking them to identify their waste-disposal sites.